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TAGS: PREL NATO HR
SUBJECT: NATIONAL COMMITTEE FOR NATO UNITES TOP LEADERSHIP

¶1. (U) President Mesic, PM Sanader and Parliament Speaker Seks agreed November 2 to co-chair a "National Committee for NATO Membership" to coordinate government, political party and state institutional activities in pursuit of NATO membership. Among other things, the committee will help relevant ministries develop a communication strategy to inform the Croatian public about NATO membership. Other committee members include deputy parliament speakers (representing opposition parties), the heads of parliamentary committees for national security and international affairs, and heads of parliamentary delegations to international bodies; the ministers of foreign affairs, defense and finance; Croatia's ambassador to NATO; the national coordinator for NATO (an assistant minister of foreign affairs), the Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff, the heads of the Office of the Council for National Security and the Office of the President; presidential advisors on the political system, national security, and defense; the head of the Information Department of the Office of the President and the government spokesman.

¶2. (SBU) COMMENT: This new committee was previewed for the Ambassador and U/S Burns by the Prime Minister earlier this week. It publicly commits Croatia's top political leadership, including the sometimes unpredictable and slightly "Yugo-nostalgic" President Mesic, to NATO membership. The committee is clearly a result of PM Sanader's desire to keep up the positive momentum from his October White House visit, where President Bush stressed the importance of political leadership in building public support for NATO membership.

END COMMENT
BRADTKE